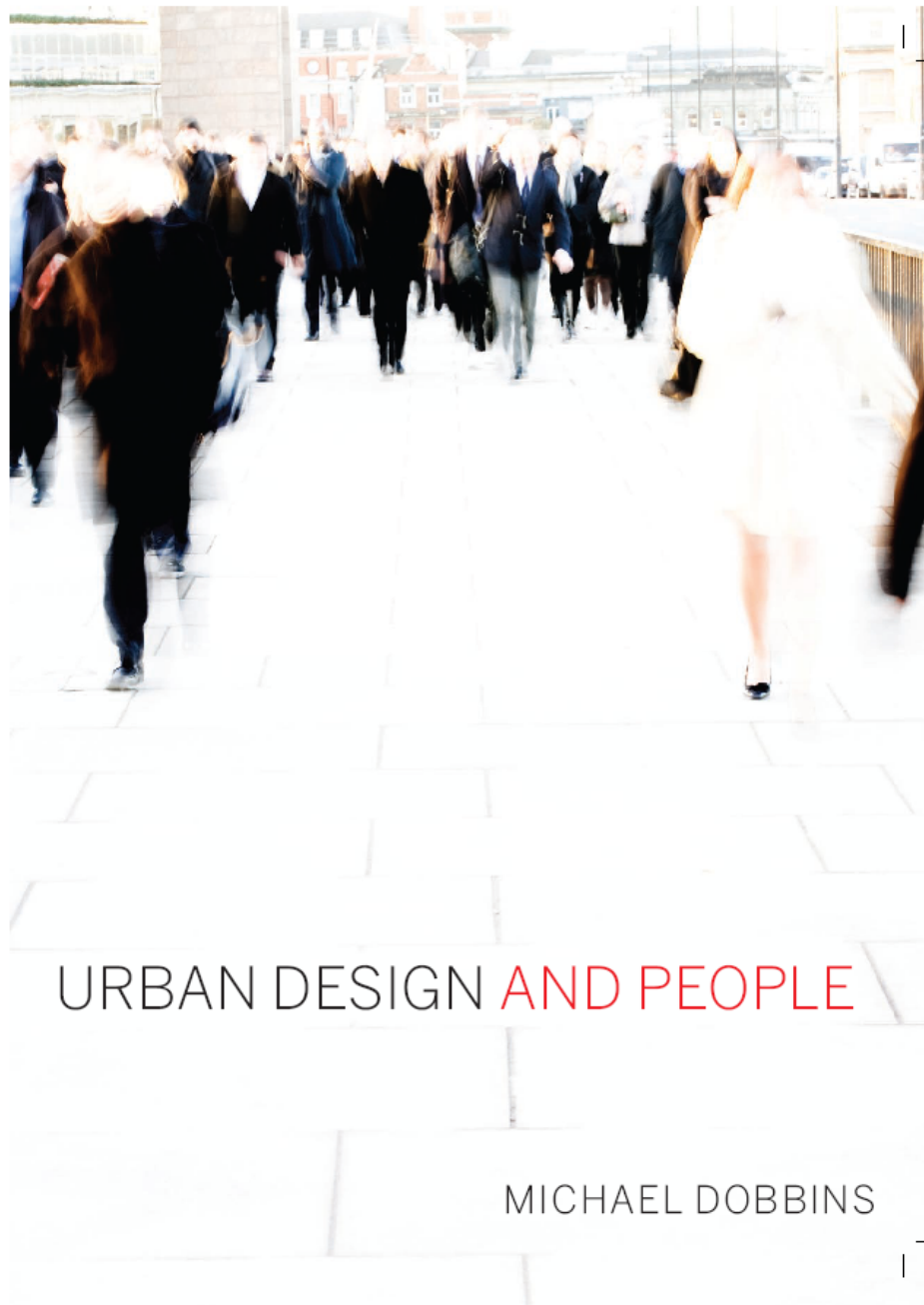


Why *Urban* Design?

Mike Dobbins

Research Forum – Georgia Tech – September 24, 2009





Why the book?

- the need for a comprehensive text
- change happens, and coming out of the downturn we must be better prepared to bring about better development in the civic environment

What?

- for citizens, the book is a guide for how they can assure that design and development initiatives get done in a way to leave things better than they were before
- for practitioners, it describes and exhorts the kind of interdisciplinary collaboration essential for improving the civic environment
- for students, the book is a comprehensive introductory text on the theory and practice of urban design and development

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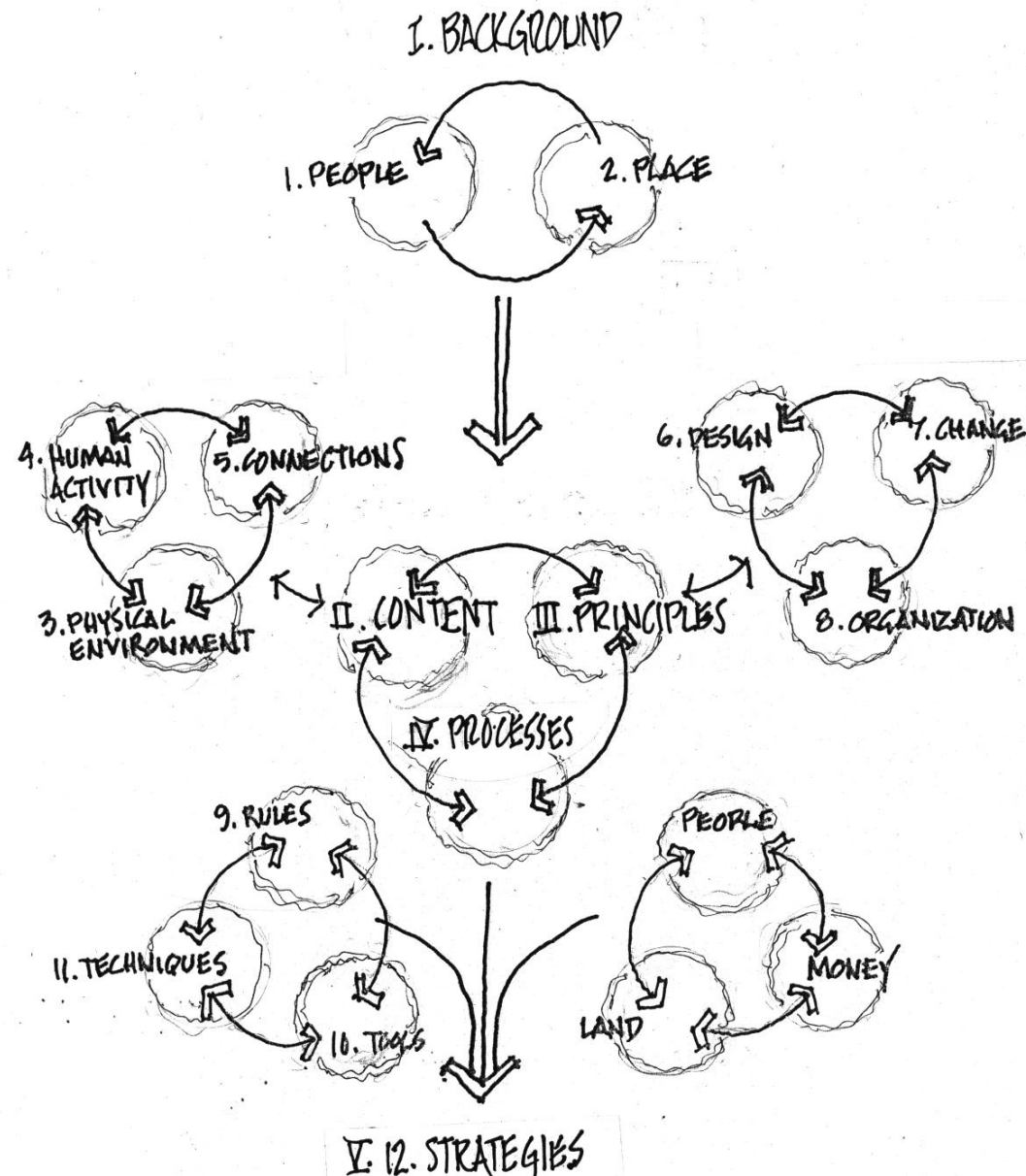
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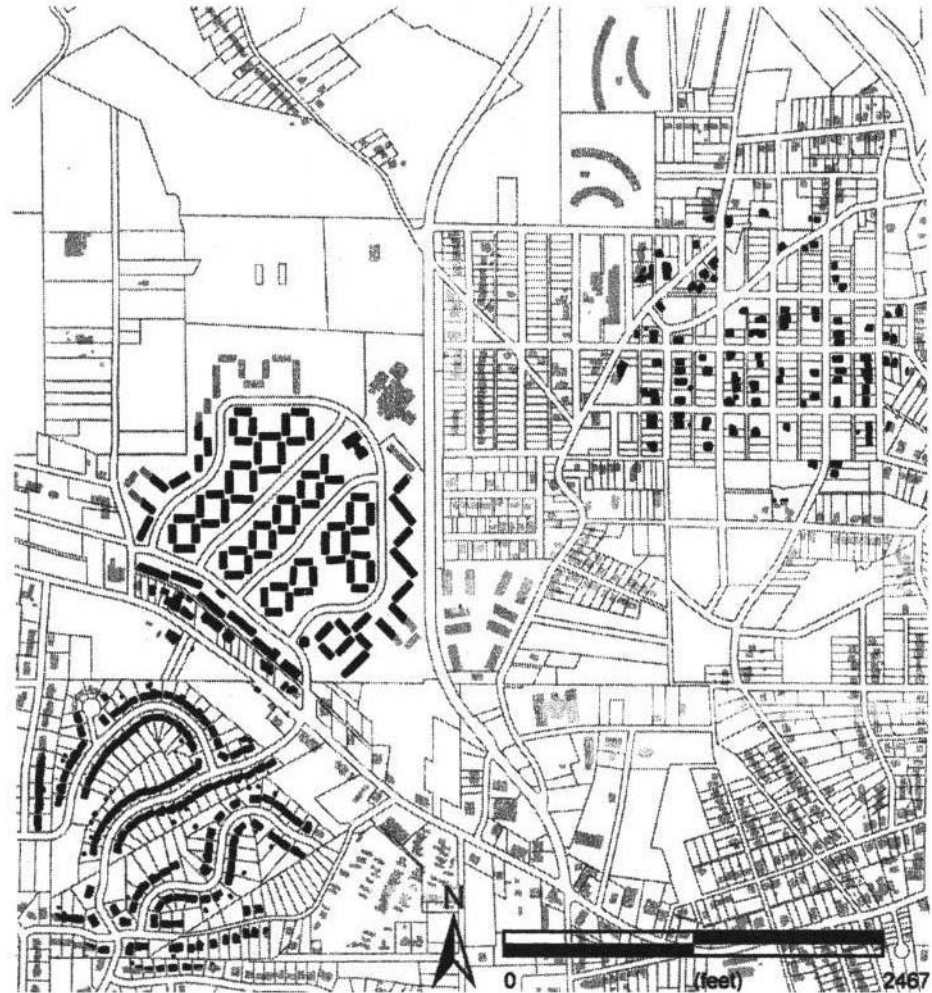
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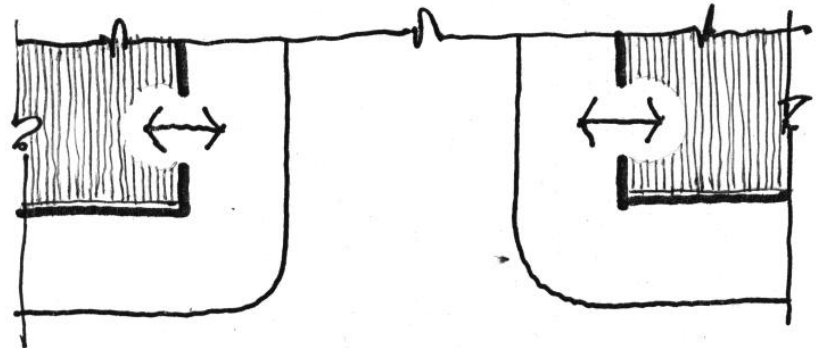
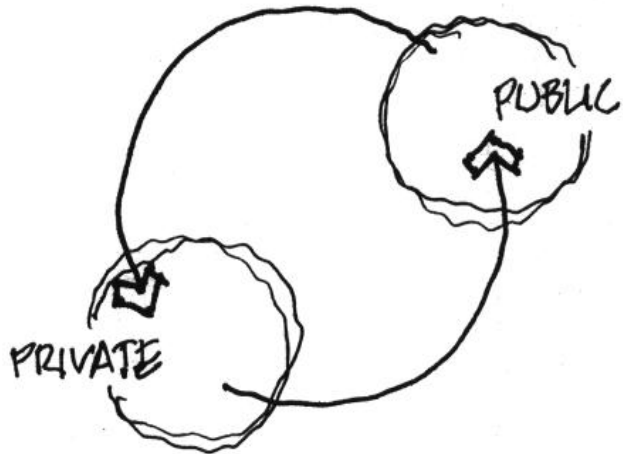
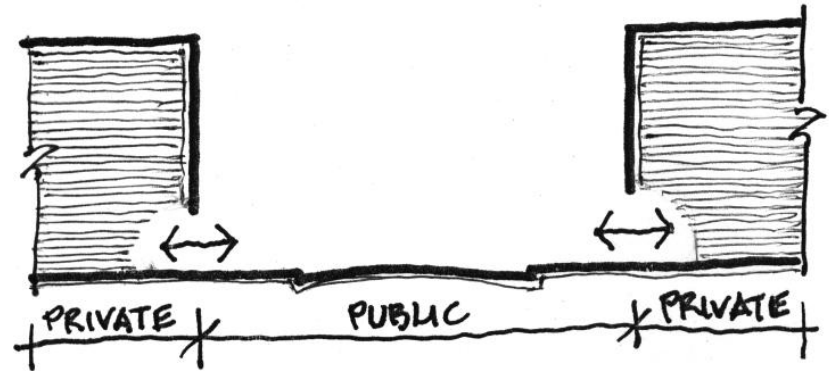
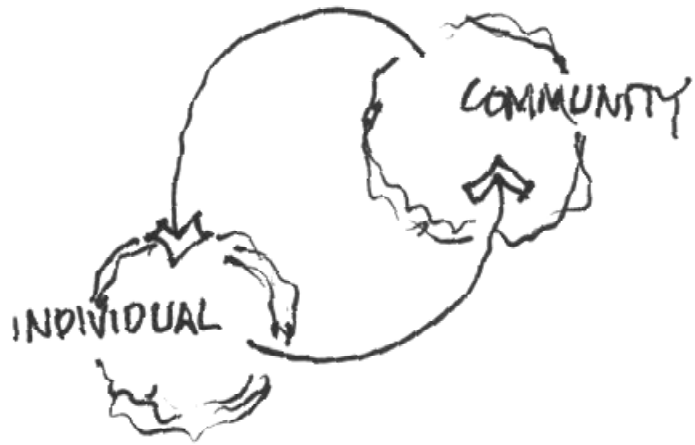
Urban Design

the obverse of *building* design

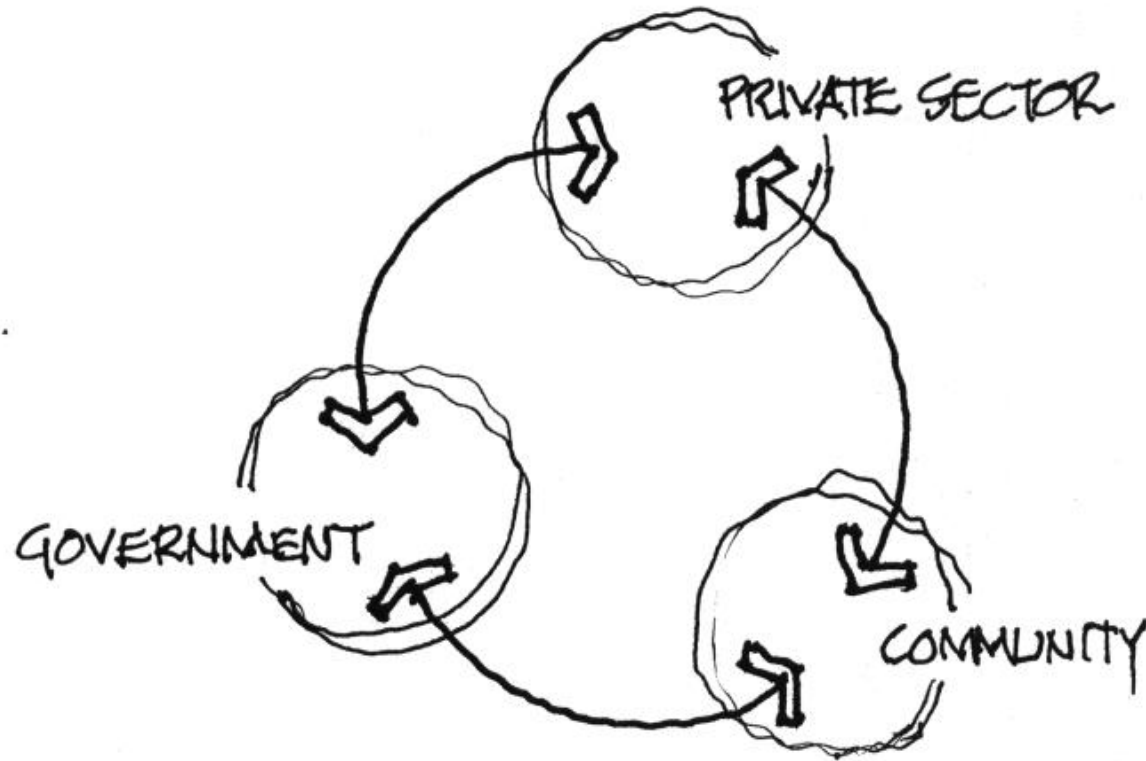
- Not about objects in space, but about space itself
- Not about a single client, but about the people who share the space



individual and community - private and public



the uneasy associations whose footprints are evident in every public place



“Fifty-nine and a half minutes of brilliance, thirty seconds of hauteur” James Fallows, the Atlantic

“Until nearly the end, it was entirely captivating. Gehry was funny, illuminating, vivid, unpretentious-seeming.Then the questions from the audience began. Fred Kent put forth the premise that ‘great iconic buildings fall short as fully attractive and effective public places, where people are drawn to congregate and spend time.’ He challenged Gehry to do even more to make his buildings attractive by this measure too.

“Gehry didn’t like the question, but the questioner asked one more time, and Gehry did something I found simply incredible and unforgettable. “you are a pompous man,” he said – and waved his hand in a dismissive gesture, much as Louis XIV might have used to wave away some offending underling. He was unmistakably shooing or waving the questioner away from the microphone, as an inferior – again, in a gesture hardly ever seen in post-feudal times.

I was sorry that I witnessed those thirty seconds. They are impossible to forget and entirely change my impression of the man. I was more amazed when part of the audience, maybe by reflex, applauded.”

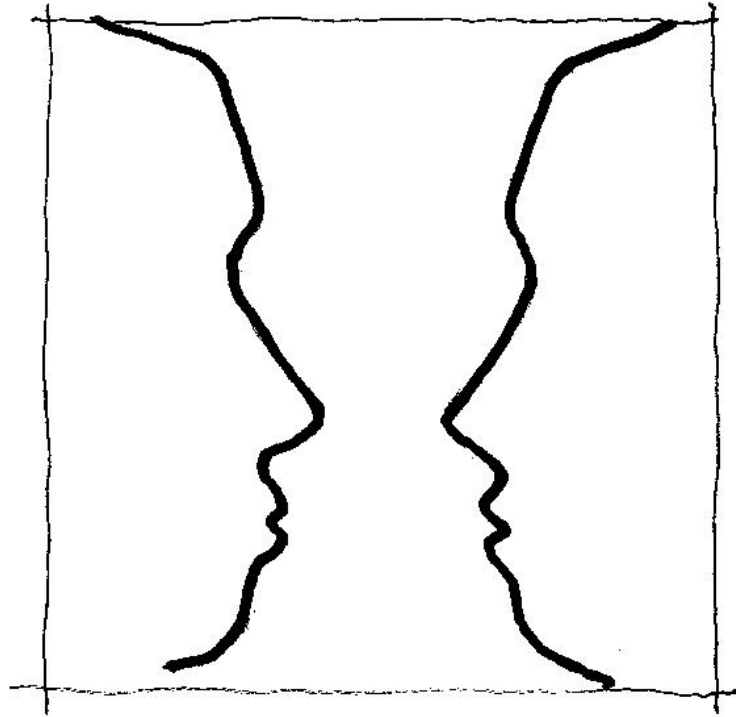
“Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody only because, and only when, they are created for everybody” – Jane Jacobs

- the point is that most everything about the design of the civic environment is substantially different than the design of objects:
- the client is the public everybody, not the private somebody
- the canvas is ever-changing, not locked into a specific site and singular purpose
- the job is not a “project” with a clear beginning and end, but a continuum where design enters and leaves a work in progress
- and so urban design principles apply to the field, not the figure

design matters

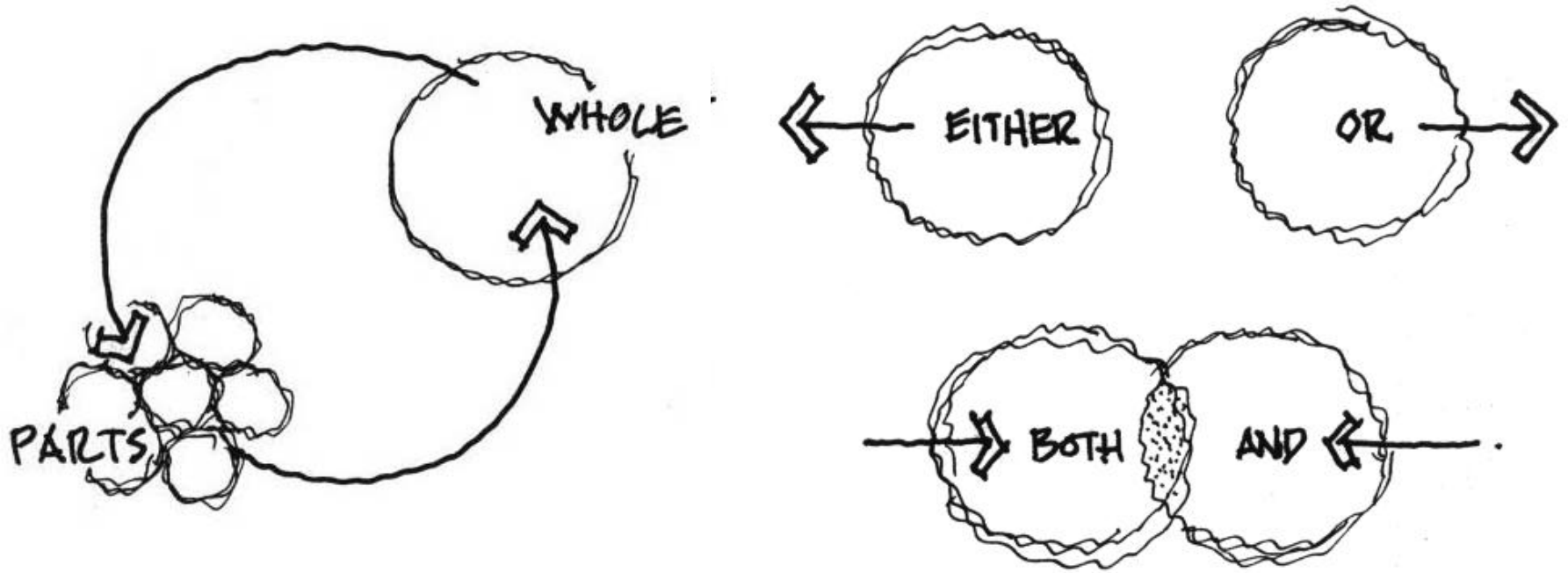


design to reflect rather than express



LISTEN, LOOK, AND RESPOND

design consciously and holistically

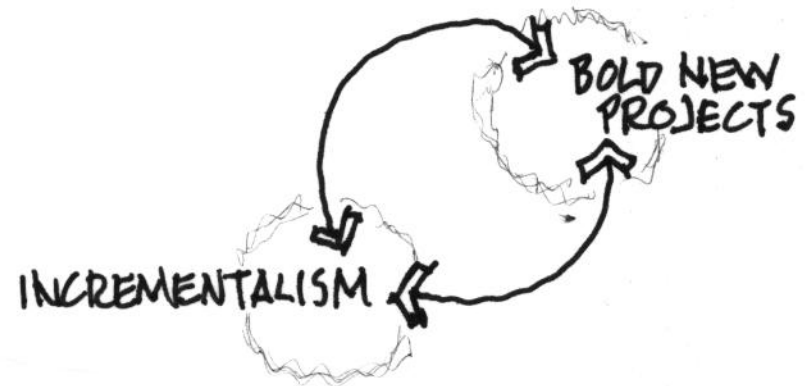
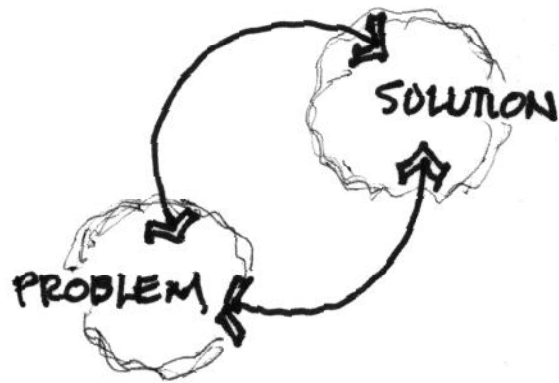


COLLABORATE!

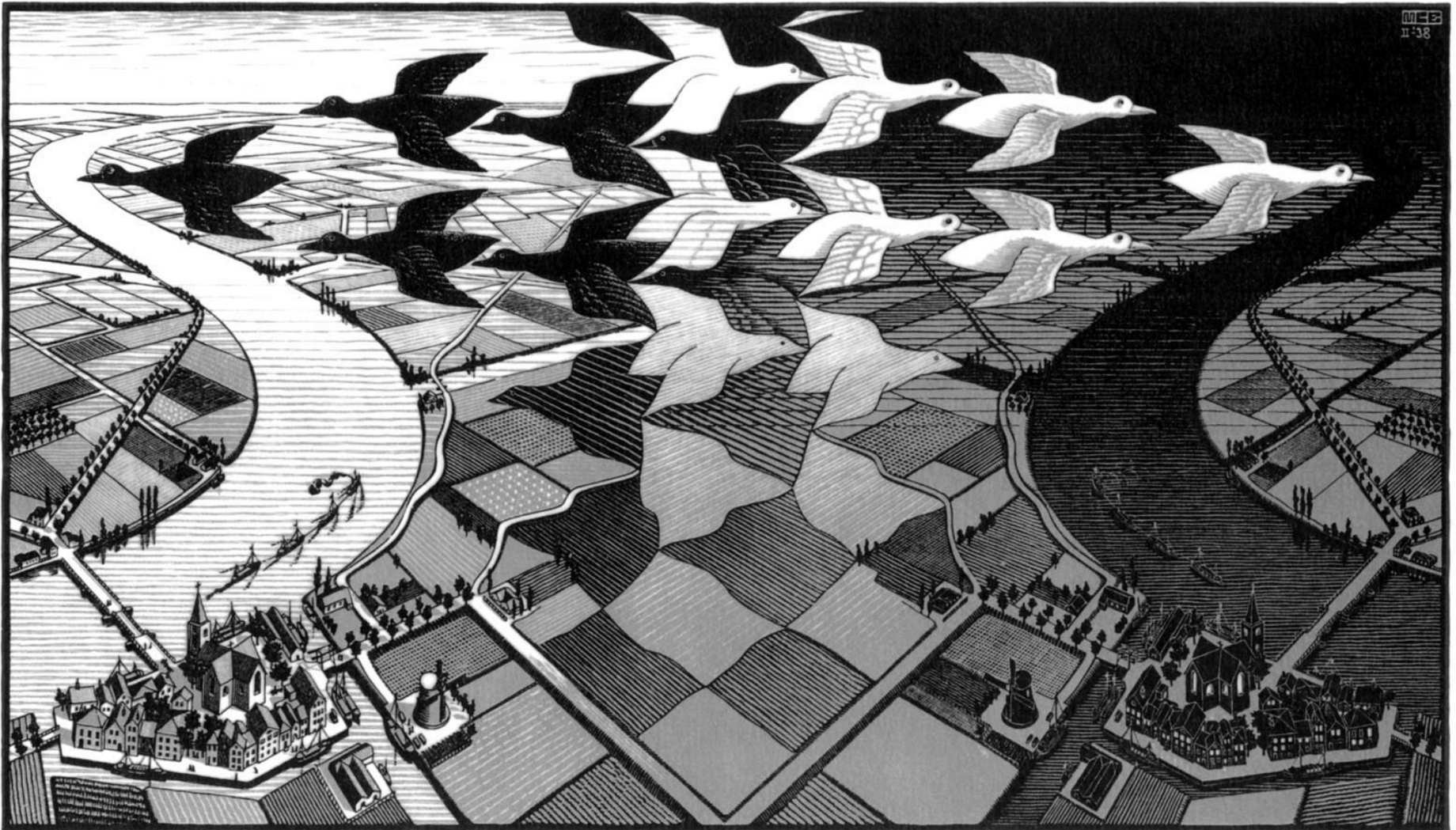
design skills are essential

- urban design is a linking skill, including and synthesizing civil engineering, city planning, architecture, and landscape architecture
- drawing, measuring, and representing
- design at multiple scales
 - person and car
 - crossroads to regions
- think, analyze, and conceptualize three dimensionally, holistically, and simultaneously

beware of “solutionism”



Design in the context of time and motion



we've come a long way, maybe

- continuing rise of citizen activism and access to processes
 - environmental reform
 - transportation reform
 - quality of life initiatives
 - support for density, diversity
 - community initiated livable centers initiatives
- leading to growing demand, thus markets for urban design
 - Urban Land Institute
 - Congress for the New Urbanism
 - AIA Communities by Design
 - APA and ASLA divisions
 - Architecture and engineering firms creating urban design units
 - Georgia Tech coming to have perhaps the strongest and most diverse faculty and program for training future urban designers
- where we may be going:

Lifting the role of the people in design and development to serve the needs of the people - the ultimate judge of whether places work, please, and sustain. Places are not just commodities.

